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Connecticut General Assembly
Housing Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Housing Committee Members,

There are many Housing bills before you today and I'm sorry I could not be here to testify in person.

I am support of those bills that modify Connecticut General Statute 8-30g in a way that allows towns to develop without being tied to legislation that simply has not and does not work. I support Bills # 443, 5063, 5155, 5220, 5501, 5620 and I especially support #6116.

When I moved to this great state back in the late 1980's, I was working my way through college, doing what most young adults do...living in an apartment with roommates and going to school. It took longer than most to work full time while attending college, but I didn't give it a second thought. I enjoyed Connecticut and especially New Haven for the arts and culture.

Fast forward a few years to the mid 1990's. I knew that I wanted to stay in Connecticut. My choices were to continue renting, or purchase a house, which seemed unlikely with my income at that time. However, New Haven had a downpayment assistance program that allowed me the option, should I find a likely house, to purchase - albeit, I knew I'd still have to have roommates to afford **anything**.

There was a single family house in the East Rock neighborhood of New Haven, a small cape, for sale, "as is", that I kept eyeing. It felt right. I could finally invest in an area where I could walk my dog around East Rock Park and truly call the area home.

So, listed at \$75,000, I took my chances and offered \$45,000. The counter offer was 45,500. I said I wouldn't budge and very quickly I became a young homeowner!

What's my point? My point is that during the time I moved to Connecticut, there was a task force that began an effort create more "affordable housing".

This task force set out to find a way to have more affordable housing in Connecticut. And so began the creation of “the affordable housing appeals act” or CT General Statute 8-30g.

This statute set rules that stated each of the 169, very unique, municipalities, must have 10% of their housing deed restricted to being affordable. Meaning that 10% of the units, deed restricted, must be at 80% of the area median income, or state median income, whichever was less.

It was a statute that was based on Massachusetts’s statute “40b”. Essentially these two statutes were there to help people set roots in their states, as I had...to make the playing grounds more equitable and to keep residents.

However, what it didn’t do was to create more affordable housing. What it **did** do was to take away the individual town’s well laid out plans (or Plans of Conservation and Development – which by state law were supposed to be revised every 10 years) and their intentions of how they wanted their communities to look and grow.

8-30g was modified a few times in the early 1990’s. But it was always to the loudest voice. It was modified to allow, for instance, accessory apartments to be counted into the “affordable” category. The only problem was the language crafting what was deemed “accessory apartments” applied to one town’s definition of “accessory”, thus disqualifying many other municipalities from counting theirs into the 10%.

To date, there are only about 25 municipalities who have officially met the 10% criterion. The others? They do have affordable housing. It may not be deed restricted, for what landlord is willing to deed restrict properties for 10 plus years?

Hamden, for example, has a large quantity of affordable units. Just look at Mix Avenue as one example. Yet Hamden has not reached the 10% mark.

Why is meeting this 10% so important. Here’s why.

If a municipality does not have 10% deed restricted units, then any developer can come in, decide to build on a small piece of land that was intended by zoning and by the town’s Plan of

Conservation and Development, to be single family housing or two-family housing, and, instead, the land can be "spot zoned" and built with too many units, impacting what the neighborhood was intended to be.

8-30g throws away most of the town's zoning rights and the developers and the attorneys know this and bank on it.

Transit oriented development, building larger, denser within transportation nodes is good. Spot zoning and holding towns hostage is certainly **not**.

Municipalities, when confronted with a developer's 8-30g plans will either fight to the core to maintain that the massive development does not fit and hinders the health and welfare of the neighborhood, which is tremendously costly – great for the attorneys – but essentially can tie the municipality's hands. But especially in hard economic times like this, towns are likely to not fight, not go through the tasks of putting together return of records and such.

So, I moved here, not knowing such legislation was taking place and yet I found my way to make it. And by the way, Massachusetts 40-b has been modified many times over because of these same problems Connecticut is facing with this legislation.

There are alternatives. If you look at the State on a regional perspective, you'll find that some regions have substantially more affordable housing than others. Or take into consideration how towns serve large low income populations in different ways.

I ask that you kindly rethink CGS 8-30g and make it work, for once, or eliminate it completely.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Andrea Sangrey Aldrich